July 2005. The price thereafter firmed up to reach a high of Rs. 7925 in January 2006. Silver prices were also generally easy during 2003 but gained during 2004. The price was subdued during most of 2005, but showed a firm trend towards the year end, with the price reaching Rs. 12983 per kg in January, 2006. The Movements in prices of gold and silver in India are generally in tandem with similar movements in international markets. The rise in the prices in the recent periods in India largely reflect the rise abroad.

Expansion of banks

1538. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have been urged to expand Public Sector Banks;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are considering to expand Public Sector Banks; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) To enable the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to carry out their functions efficiently and without impediment, Government has announced and autonomy package for the public sector banks on 22.02.2005 which, *inter-alia,* allows them to pursue new lines of business as part of overall business strategy and make suitable acquisitions of companies or businesses, close/merge unviable branches, open overseas offices, set up subsidiaries and exit a line of business, subject to statutory requirements, Government policy prescriptions and regulatory guidelines issued by RBI from time to time.

Introduction of Inheritance Tax

1539. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to introduce Inheritance Tax in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government are aware that the Inheritance Tax is unpopular in the countries wherever it has been imposed?